

# **Joint Legislative Task Force on Water Resource Mitigation**

*When drought comes to town too often.*

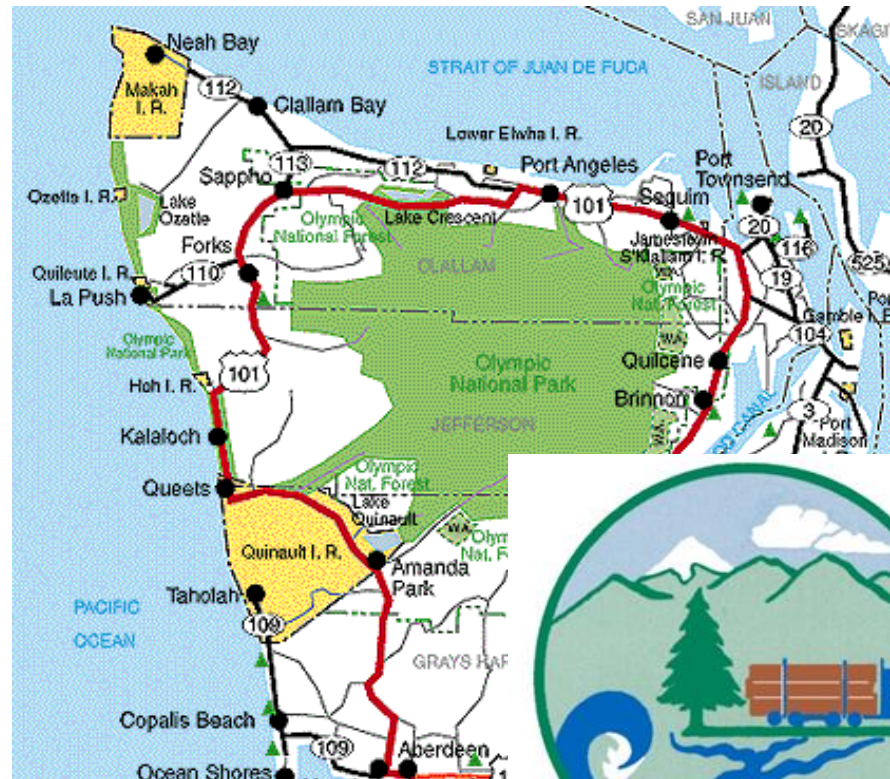
*Forks' experience since 2015*

William "Rod" Fleck  
City Attorney/Planner



# Where's Forks?

- Incorporated in 1945;
- Mayor Tim Fletcher
- City Council:
  - John Hillcar
  - Juanita Weissenfels
  - Joe Soha
  - Mike Gilstrap
  - Jeff Gingell
- Economic Base:
  - **Natural Resources**  
(Timber, Fishing)
  - **Tourism**  
(Olympic National Park, Twilight,)
  - **Government**  
(Hospital, School, Prison, Local)
- 2020 Demographics
  - 3,335 people in City, with "urban growth area" at about 5,000..
  - 75+% of the students qualify for free/reduced lunch pre-COVID.
  - Closest municipality to a temporal rainforest in the lower 48.



*Wait, you said you are the closest city to our State's rain forest – so what's up with you being part of a drought discussion?*

## Forks Boasts Of 153.81 Inches Of Rain -- More Than 12 Feet Breaks 1921 Record For Peninsula Town

Dec 17, 1997

Dee Norton

Seattle Times Staff Reporter

Forks, you're all wet!

And residents of the water-logged Olympic Peninsula community couldn't be prouder.

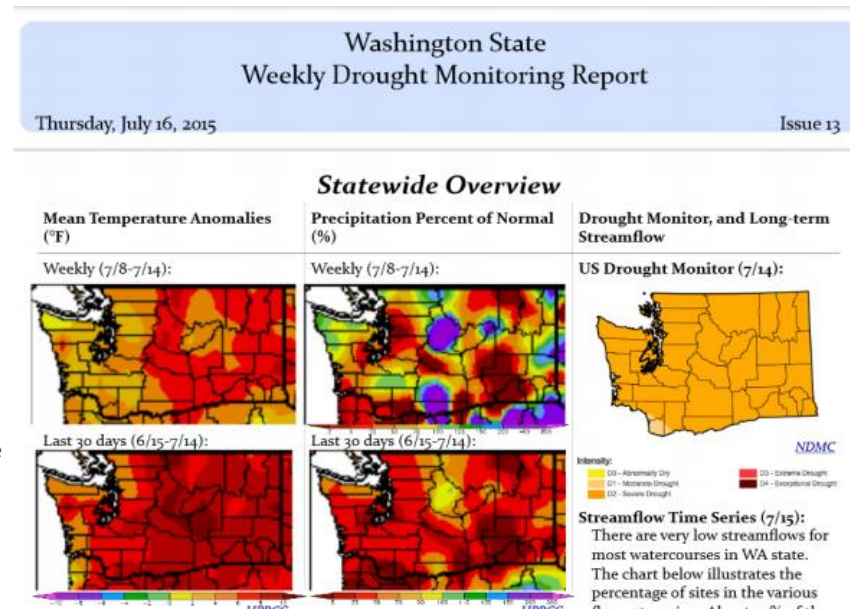
The Clallam County town that relishes its reputation as one of the wettest spots in the continental United States has passed a milestone of ponderous proportions for precipitation. Last night at 9 o'clock, the Forks community rain gauge, one of the National Weather Service reporting sites for the area, registered 153.81 inches, topping the old record by 0.02 that was set in 1921.

That's more than 12 feet of rain.

By comparison, Seattle's average annual rainfall is 37.19 inches. As of midnight, Seattle had received 43.99 inches of rain this year. The annual record of 55.14 inches was set in 1950.

Jerry King, who manages a mobile-home park in Forks, tends the community's rain gauge for the National Weather Service.

At 4 p.m. yesterday - the official gauge-reading time - the rainfall stood at 153.21 inches, just over a half-inch from history.



WADOE – 2015 Drought Report

<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/1611001.pdf>

 The Columbian

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### Washington struggles with drought due to low snowpack

Projection is 4 percent of normal in the Olympics

The Columbian  
Published: March 16, 2015, 12:00pm

Share:    

SEATTLE — It is possible to have rain — lots of it — and still be plagued by drought.

Just look at tiny Forks, which bills itself as the wettest town in the contiguous United States. As of Thursday, 26.6 inches of rain had fallen on the Olympic Peninsula ...

# So – 2015 was a fluke year? Sadly not – Part 1

- In 2015, the City began working with DOE to secure funding to extend or create a new deeper well system;
- Governor Inslee ended the Drought Emergency and that shut off emergency funding.

## 2019 Drought

Menu Q 57°F Daily News

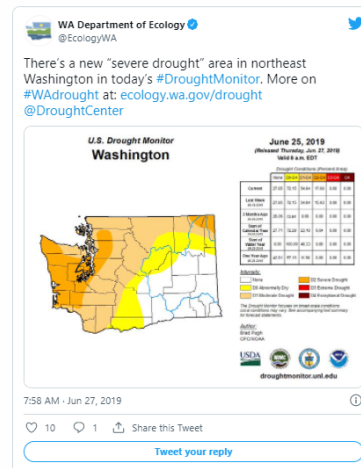
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1,900 cfs this time of year.

On Thursday, flows in the Calawah River were as low as 93.6 cfs, well under the median flow of 229 cfs. The lowest flow the river has seen on June 27 was in 2015, when flows on that day were as low as 83 cfs. On Tuesday, flows dropped below 80 cfs.

Rivers in central Clallam County were still about double the record low flows set in 2015.

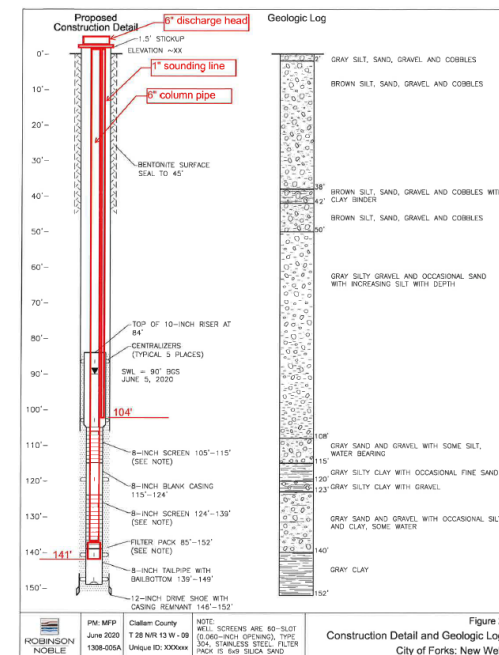
"The little rain that we're getting knocks down the dust and provides some water for grass to grow a little, but it's not addressing the reduction in our groundwater system," Fleck said.



Fleck and other West End officials met with state Department of Ecology

## DOE Emergency Drought Relief Funds For Well No. 6

- \$350k DOE Drought Grant
- \$530K CoF Water Utility Funds
- 141' new well → 19'-26' deeper than existing wells





# So – 2015 was a fluke year?

## Sadly not – Part 2

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### ARE FORKS AND ABERDEEN IN A DROUGHT? STATE OFFICIALS ISSUE ADVISORY

Posted By: Radio Pacific, Inc May 27, 2021 @ 3:33 pm Local News, News, News Daypop



By Pepper Fisher

**CLALLAM COUNTY** – Following an extremely dry couple of months, the Department of Ecology has issued a drought advisory for most of Washington state, including the wettest spots in the 48 contiguous states, Aberdeen and Forks.

Eastern Washington is seeing by far the most alarming conditions this year, with growing concerns for farmers and ranchers. Ecology's Water Resources Planner Jeff Marti says March through April was the fourth driest such period for Washington since 1895.

But few would expect a similar advisory for the western half of Clallam County and all coastal areas south of us.

Marti points out that while Washington mountains received an above-normal snowpack this year, not all watersheds are fed by melting snow.

We were under a drought advisory for 2021:

- Mayor asked for voluntary water conservation early in the Summer;
- We also saw some rain events that managed to help slow the draw down of the wells.
- BUT – in six years, three levels of drought in one of the wettest places in Washington

WELL WATER LEVELS REPORT September 3, 2021										
	Well #1	Well #2	Well #3	Well #4	Well #5	Well #6	Forks Sand & Gravel	Quillayute Airport	Calawah River	Remarks
Water level off (ft.)	97.00	103.47	100.79	100.26					51.35	Sounder gets stuck in #5 Sounder bottomed out at 100 ft w/ no read for #6
August 27, 2021 (off)	96.70	101.50	99.96	97.42					51.58	
Water level on (ft.)										
Gallons per minute										
Draw down (ft.)										
Draw down (gallons/ft.)										
Amps										
Caution level (ft.)	118.00	105.00	103.00	113.00						
Inlet level (ft.	122.91	>109.5	105.00	115.00	110.00					
Note: Measurements are in ft. to the nearest 1/100 ft.										

Note: Measurements are in ft. to the nearest 1/100 ft.

Prepared by: Joe Gayde

# Closing thoughts

- Much of the local communities of the state have financial challenges:
  1. Developing new infrastructure to address potential drought impacts; or,
  2. Retrofitting existing infrastructure to do so.
- WA-Ecology was incredibly helpful throughout these past six years. Limited funding and resources available, but staffing expertise that has been incredible to rely upon.
- Challenges of building an emergency well:
  - Rural location;
  - Tight timeline with emergency funds;
  - COVID
  - Interplay with City, Ecology and WA-Department of Health
    - This is something where one agency dealing with these emergency or drought retrofits/new infrastructure should be considered with the other being directed to be supportive.
    - Ecology knows water rights, locations, etc. Health should be a supportive, assisting collaborator in these efforts.
  - For some municipalities, water rights could prove to be a barrier that would make any new well a challenge to bring on line.